

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LUSAKA 01122 260938Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T LUSAKA 1122

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR RH ZA US UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: THE U.S. ROLE IN CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

REF: (A) LONDON 6687, (B) STATE 92281

1. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER MILES HAS SHOWN ME A COPY OF HIS RECOMMENDATION TO LONDON ON THE U.S. ROLE IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE (OBVIOUSLY I WOULD BE MOST EMBARRASSED IF THE FCO BECAME AWARE THAT WE WERE FAMILIAR WITH HIS RECOMMENDATION). MILES HAS EXPRESSED THE SAME RESERVATIONS ABOUT OUR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE WHICH HAD BEEN NOTED ELSEWHERE. IN HIS VIEW THE CONFERENCE SHOULD BE KNOWN AS A BRITISH CONFERENCE WITH THE BRITISH HAVING THE FREEDOM TO CONSULT WITH WHOM THEY WISH WHEN THEY WISH. THUS AT THE PROPER TIME THEY COULD INVOLVE US WITHOUT RAISING A DEBATE ON THE SUBJECT BEFOREHAND.

2. I AM MORE CONCERNED THAN REFTEL (A) ABOUT SMITH'S REACTION TO ANY PUBLIC BACKING OFF ON U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE. THIS WOULD BE ANOTHER EXAMPLE TO HIM OF BRITAIN'S FAILURE TO HONOR A COMMITMENT AS SOON AS THE NATIONALISTS RAISE AN OBJECTION TO IT AND WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE CONFIRMATION OF THEIR BIASED ROLE IN FAVOR OF THE AFRICAN POSITION.

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HE MIGHT WELL MAKE USE OF IT FOR HIS OWN PURPOSE.

3. IF THE PRESENT STEP IS CONFINED TO CONSULTATIONS RATHER THAN ANNOUNCEMENT OF A FORMAL CONFERENCE, IT WOULD APPEAR TO US THAT WE COULD AVOID DISCUSSION OF FORMAL REPRESENTATIONRRRA AT THE CONFERENCE FOR THE TIME BEING AND GET AT WHAT IS THE IMPORTANT MATTER--DRAFTING OF A CONSTITUTION.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE DEPARTMENT'S EARLIER QUERY (REFTEL B) ABOUT OUR BRIPISH COLLEAGUES ASSESSMENTS OF THE FRONTLINE AND NATIONALIST DEGREE OF COMMITMENT TO THE OWN PROPOSALS, IT IS MY IMPRESSION THEY SHARE OUR VIEWS FULLY. I HAD DISCUSSED THE SITUATION WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER MILES BEFORE DRAFTING LUSAKA 1084. SOME OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE TELEGRAM COMES FROM THAT CONVERSATION. I BELIEVE HE SHARES OUR CONCERN ON EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT OF A FORMAL CONFERENCE. MILES SUPPORTS OPEINING OF A LIAISON OFFICE IN SALISBURY IN ORDER TO PERMIT EASIER FLOW OF INFORMATION IN BOTH DIRECTION. HE AGREES, HOWEVER, THAT WE MUST MOVE CAREFULLY ON THIS IN ORDER NOT TO STIMULATE THE NATIONALIST FEARS THAT WE SUPPORT AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT.

LOW

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